10 ENDEAVORS FOR A BETTER RAMADAN

The great month of Ramadan is the best chance for any Muslim to improve themselves in their Religion. It is a great opportunity for the sinners to turn to Allaah and repent and a valuable gift for the Muttaquun (the pious) to raise their levels of piety. Those who miss this great opportunity and do not change their ways have incurred a massive loss. The following points highlight some actions that need to be enhanced during the month of Ramadan:

1. Changing yourself to be a better Muslim

To achieve this a Muslim should accomplish the following:

- Istiqbaal bi Tawbathun Nasuuh - For a sincere and acceptable Tawbah (repentance) the Muslim should repent purely for the **sake of Allaah** and completely leave off the sins for which he seeks repentance. Even those who have not sinned should repent to Allaah, as repentance is a Mercy from Him and an opportunity to elevate the levels, as stated in the following Aayah:

".....And all of you beg Allaah to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful."

[An-Nur: 31]

- Alter his Ahlaaq (mannerisms/character)
- To return the Haqq (rights) to those whom you oppressed.

2. Learning and practicing rulings & issues of Ibaadat (acts of worship) related to Ramadan

This is one of the greatest ways to change oneself. Those who choose to be ignorant of the rulings of Allaah will not benefit from Ramadan and will remain as losers unless they strive to learn the Ahkaam of the Religion. The following Aayat attests to this:

.......Say: "Are those who know equal to those who know not?" It is only men of understanding who will remember (i.e. get a lesson from Allaah's Signs and Verses).

[Az-Zumar: 9]

"Verily, therein (in the Signs of Allaah) is indeed a reminder for him who has a heart or gives ear while he is heedful."

[Qaf: 37]

Some examples of the acts of worship the Prophet ﷺ used to do more frequently in the Month of Ramadan include:

- Increasing in generosity towards the people and family as in the following Hadith:

  Narrated Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه:

  "The Prophet was the most generous amongst the people, and he used to be more so in the month of Ramadan when Jibreel visited him, and Jibreel used to meet him on every night of Ramadan till the end of the month. The Prophet used to recite the Holy Qur'an to Jibreel, and when Jibreel met him, he used to be more generous than a fast wind (which causes rain and welfare)".

  [Sahih al Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 126]

- Increasing recitation of the Qur'aan
- I'tikaaf in the Masjid
- Seeking Ilm from the circles of knowledge
- An Naseehah (Advice) after practicing yourself

3. Learning how the Salaf (pious predecessors) used to worship during Ramadan

The importance the Salaf gave to acts of worship during Ramadan was so great, that if you read any book on their biographies you would notice that there is a section/paragraph dedicated to what each individual used to do in Ramadan.

The best and one of most significant examples of this is that numerous landmark battles took place in Ramadan. The aim of this was to greatly increase the reward by combining the rewards of Jihaad, Sawm and Ramadan together.

4. Being steadfast and encouraging oneself all the time

It is imperative that one reduces the times for relaxation and work harder as Ramadan progresses as the most important time of the month is closer to the end. This is why highly rewarding acts of worship (such as I'tikaaf) have been prescribed towards the end of the month.

5. Practical methods of encouraging oneself

The ideal method for this is to stick with individuals who are strong in their worship and are Muhsinun (good-doers) and to avoid and keep afar the people of Mubaah (conditionally permitted acts such as trading, etc.) and the ignorant people of the Dunya. Our Prophet ﷺ

encouraged keeping good company every time as in the following Hadith. Hence, one should more seriously implement this advice in the Month of Ramadan.

On the authority of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضي الله عنه, the Prophet ﷺ said:

"The likeness of a righteous friend and an evil friend, is the likeness of a (musk) perfume seller and a blacksmith. As for the perfume seller, he may either bestow something on you, or you may purchase something from him, or you may benefit from his sweet smell. And as for the blacksmith, he may either burn your clothes, or you may be exposed to his awful smell."

[Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim]

6. Month of the Masjid

It is highly encouraged to visit and spend most of the time in the Masjid during Ramadan, especially in the Masaajid of Ahlus Sunnah or among a group of Salafis in any Masjid. A splendid reward awaits those who attach themselves to the Masjid as stated in this Hadith:

Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet of Allaah ﷺ said:

"Seven are (the persons) whom Allaah would give protection with His Shade on the Day when there would be no shade but that of Him (i.e. on the Day of Judgment, and they are): a just ruler, a youth who grew up with the worship of Allaah; a person whose heart is attached to the mosques; ...."

[Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim]

7. Attending the circles of knowledge

As seeking Ilm of the Religion is one of the greatest Ibaadah, it is a great opportunity for seeking increased reward during Ramadan, as compared to the other months of the year. Furthermore, as there is much Barakah (blessing) during this month it is very ideal for learning, memorizing and revising Qur'aan and the books of Jurisprudence, etc.

8. Learning and understanding the Qur'aan

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه:

"...... and Jibreel used to meet him on every night of Ramadan till the end of the month. The Prophet used to recite the Holy Qur'an to Jibreel ...."

[Sahih al Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 31, Number 126]

The above Hadith shows us that reciting and studying the Qur'aan during this blessed month is very important. Hence, it is best to complete the recitation of the whole Qur'aan before the end of the month, as this is the Sunnah. Also studying the Tafsir (exegesis) of the Qur'aan is very beneficial in order to increase our understanding of the Words of Allaah.

9. Performing I'tikaaf (secluding oneself to the Masjid) to the best of one's ability

It is one of the main reasons to make one's Ramadan blessed and fruitful. The Prophet ﷺ placed so much emphasis on it, such that if he could not perform it in Ramadan he used to make up for it later on, as in the Hadith of 'Aisha رضي الله عنها:

"The Prophet intended to practice 'Itikaaf and when he reached the place where he intended to perform 'Itikaaf, he saw some tents, the tents of 'Aisha, Hafsa and Zainab. So, he said, "Do you consider that they intended to do righteousness by doing this?" And then he went away and did not perform 'Itikaaf (in Ramadan) but performed it in the month of Shawwal for ten days".

[Sahih al Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 33, Number 250]

Some of the main objectives of 'Itikaaf is to attain Laylatul Qadr and to create brotherhood between the Mu'takifeen (those who do I'tikaaf)

10. Increasing the Du'aa (invocations) and supplications to Allaah

It is very beneficial to increase the Dua' to Allaah in this month, seeking His forgiveness for our sins, acceptance of our deeds and asking Him to make us steadfast upon the good deeds we perform during Ramadan. So in order to succeed and be steadfast in worship after Ramadan we ought to make our intentions purely for the Lord of Ramadan and not for the month only.

Transcribed by Abu Abdillaah Muhammad Rifkhan from the Muhadarah of Brother Ahmad Banajah on 5th July 2013 G – ٢٧ شعبان ١٤٣٤